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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

15 January 1986

The Philippine Election Campaign
Enters the Homestretch

Summary

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With three weeks to go before the Presidential election on 7 February, [] paints an increasingly worrisome picture for President Marcos. Marcos remains formidable--he reportedly has as much as \$300 million at his disposal--and there is still time for him to reverse the trend. [] we believe Marcos would be tempted to cancel the ballot, using a pretext such as "Communist-instigated" violence. []

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Factors For Marcos's Concern

A number of surveys--some conducted confidentially by the ruling party--indicate that without cheating Marcos would at best only defeat opposition candidate Corazon Aquino by a slim margin [] Several of the polls conclude that Marcos could easily lose, with Aquino taking as much as 53 percent of the vote []. Although several polls point to a large number of undecided voters, these results represent a major shift in voter preference since last summer, when surveys [] indicated Marcos would win easily. []

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This memorandum was prepared by [] Office of East Asian Analysis. Information available as of 10 January 1986 was used in its preparation. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to Chief, Southeast Asia Division, OEA [].

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[redacted]

Marcos has run a lackluster campaign that contrasts poorly with Aquino's dynamic performances nationwide. Marcos has confined his recent appearances to the Manila area, where he has attempted to highlight Aquino's political inexperience and alleged ties to the Communist Party. [redacted]

[redacted]

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Banking on the Machine

As the campaign enters the period in which organizational advantages will have their most telling effects, [redacted] Marcos, though concerned about growing sentiment among voters that it is "time for change," is still confident that ruling party's organization can produce an election victory. Industrialist Eduardo Cojuangco--a close presidential associate--alone has made available at least \$275 million for the campaign effort and we expect Marcos to use the government's vast resources to improve his election chances. [redacted]

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[redacted] as much as \$200 million has already been spent on the elections--including pork barrel projects and voter registration drives. Nonetheless, Marcos is concerned that provincial ruling party officials are holding back and, according to press reports, has ordered local authorities nationwide to step up campaign efforts. [redacted]

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By contrast, [redacted] Aquino has been forced to reduce her campaign budget by half because of lack of financial contributions and can plan to spend only a fraction of what the ruling party will spend. According to the US Embassy, moreover, Aquino's campaign lacks organization and has been marred by inconsistent disavowals of Communist support for her candidacy. [redacted]

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Marcos Still the One to Beat?

Whether Aquino's apparent popular support will translate into votes on election day will depend on her ability to match Marcos's political machine in turning out the vote, her success in refuting Marcos's charges that she is politically inexperienced and open to manipulation by the radicals among her advisers, and her ability to generate critical campaign financing from anti-Marcos businessmen. Her well-received speech on economic policy before businessmen in Manila last week suggests an earnest attempt to parlay early popular support into a stretch drive challenge to Marcos. [redacted]

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We believe Aquino's bid will be aided by Marcos's willingness so far to allow the National Citizen's Movement for Free Election--an independent poll monitoring organization--to act as the election's only monitoring group. Although other groups loyal to Marcos may be allowed to participate, NAMFREL is credited with preventing fraud in the National Assembly election in 1984. Marcos, however, will probably counter this safeguard

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[redacted]

with measures designed to hamper Aquino's campaign efforts. His moves already include restricting her access to government-controlled media and harassing known opposition supporters during voter registration drives last month. [redacted]

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Marcos appears to be leaving himself an out if his party appears unable to deliver the vote [redacted]

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[redacted] A senior ruling party member told US officials last week that the election commission will, on Marcos's signal, disqualify Aquino's candidacy--possibly because of her alleged ties to the Communists or her uncertain residency status. Press reports of an assassination attempt in Manila last week by a student radical against one of Marcos's daughters suggests that he may already be laying the groundwork for cancelling the ballot on the grounds of Communist inspired pre-election violence. Marcos orchestrated a similar assassination attempt against Defense Minister Enrile in 1972 and used it to justify the declaration of martial law. [redacted]

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[redacted] the military has contingency plans in case a decision to cancel the election sparks widespread public unrest. A reliable source of the opposition recently told US officials that senior military officers met at the palace last week to discuss a possible crack down if security deteriorates before the election. In addition, Marcos said in a press conference last week that he would be forced to impose martial law if Communist insurgents instigate urban violence in the weeks ahead. In our judgment, Marcos would view such a move as a last resort to retain power--and one we believe he is probably prepared to use--even though he knows that a crack down would cost him substantial political capital with foreign and domestic critics and almost certainly strain bilateral relations with Washington. [redacted]

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Election Outlook



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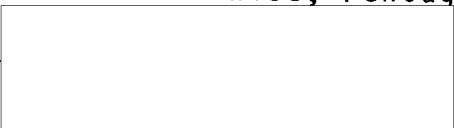

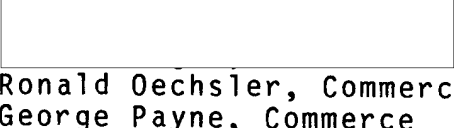
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